

F

74

C4119



R4132  
288.2

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

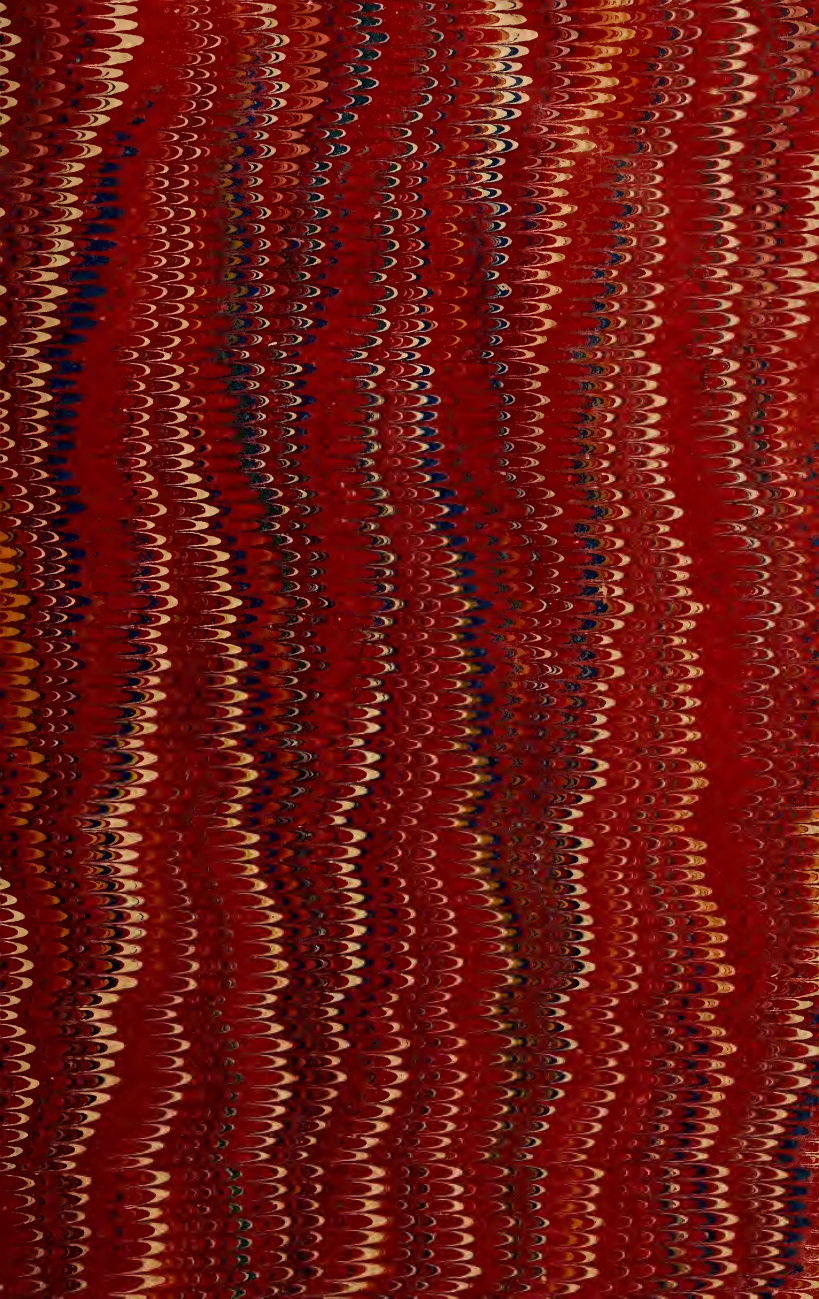
*Chap.* F74

*Shelf* C4 D19

PRESENTED BY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

















In Memoriam.

Sister Sainte Claire,

ORDER OF ST. URSULA.

Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors Sancto-  
rum ejus. Ps. 115: 15.

Charlestown:  
ADVERTISER PRESS.

1876.



# The Arsulines.



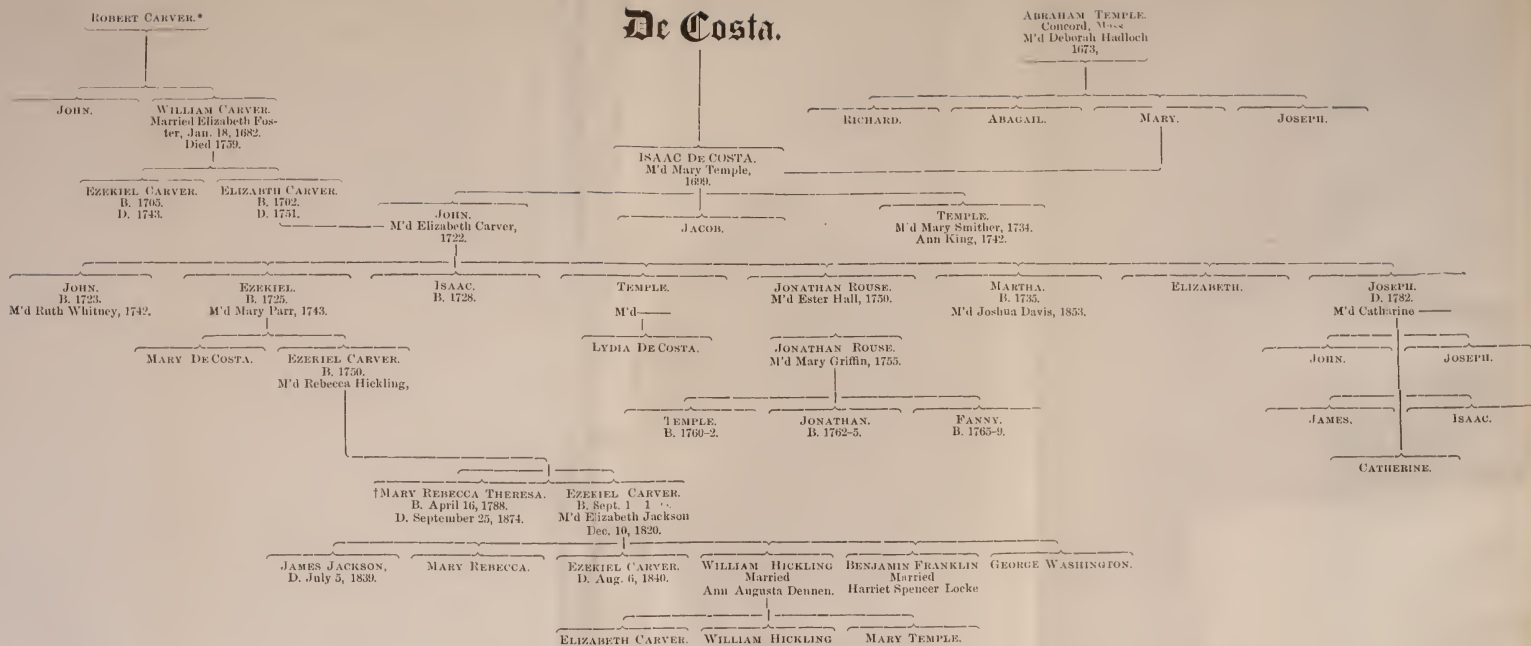


De Costa.









\*Marshfield 1638.  
Freeman 1644.  
Died Boston, 1680,  
Aged 95 yrs.

†Sister Ste. Claire.

NOTE.—This brief outline is given to correct serious errors that appeared in a chart prepared some time since, for which the author is not responsible. These errors particularly concerned the marriages in the sixth generation shown in this sketch. It may also be noted that all members of the last two generations are now living, except those two *marked* deceased.  
New York, August 21st, 1876.



WILLIAM CARVER.  
married Elizabeth Foster,  
Jan. 18, 1682.  
Died 1759.

ELIZABETH CARVER.  
B. 1702.  
D. 1751.

JOHN.  
M'd Elizabeth Carver,  
1722.

EZEKIEL.  
B. 1725.  
M'd Mary Parr, 1743.

ISAAC.  
B. 1728.

RY DE COSTA.

EZEKIEL CARVER.  
B. 1750.  
M'd Rebecca Hickling,

LY  
JOSEPH.

SAAC.

†MARY REBECCA THERESA.  
B. April 16, 1788.  
D. September 25, 1874.

EZE  
B. 30  
M'd El  
Le

JAMES JACKSON,  
D. July 5, 1839.

MARY REBECCA.

EZEK  
D. A

ELIZABETH

field 1638.  
an 1644.  
oston, 1680,  
195 yrs.

†Sister Ste. Claire.

ce, for which  
in this sketch.  
ed.  
gust 21st, 1876.



In Memoriam.

Sister Sainte Claire,

ORDER OF ST. URSULA.

Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors Sancto-  
rum ejus. Ps. 115: 15.



Charleston:

ADVERTISER PRESS.

1876.



TO  
**The Arsulines**

*THIS SKETCH*

OF

**Mary Rebecca Theresa De Costa**

*Is most respectfully Inscribed*

*By her Kinsman,*

*B. F. De COSTA.*

Easter, 1876.



## SISTER SAINTE CLAIRE.

---

**S**ISTER SAINTE CLAIRE, known in the world as Mary Rebecca Theresa De Costa, was born in Boston, April 16th, 1788, and died at the Ursuline Convent, New Orleans, September 25th, 1874. Sister Sainte Claire was a descendant of an old Boston family, being the daughter of Ezekiel Carver and Rebecca Hickling DeCosta, and representing the sixth generation in that city; her remote ancestors being from France.

The childhood of Sister Sainte Claire was marked by no striking event, though at an early age her thoughts received a religious direction. On the occasion of attending church at a time when the Mass was being performed with marked solemnity, she appears to have received an impression that practically decided the entire course of her life. Her clearness of religious apprehension was such, that at the age of sixteen she made a formal declaration of her faith; though it was not until seven years later that she received the Rite of Confirmation at the hands of the Right Reverend Dr. de Cheverus, (afterwards Cardinal), but then Bishop of Boston.

From this period her taste for the religious vocation exhibited a rapid development, her devout character and modest bearing winning the respect of all by whom she was known. By Bishop de Cheverus, Sister Sainte Claire was highly esteemed. That distinguished prelate himself doubtless anticipated what would be her final choice; for which the way, providentially, was being prepared.



At about that period, Mr. Thayer, formerly a Protestant, and then a clergyman of Boston, had resolved to devote his patrimony to the establishment of a Convent of Ursulines in his native city. While residing in Limerick, Ireland, he made the acquaintance of a pious family which contained four daughters, all of whom devoted their lives to the Ursuline Order,\* three of them crossing the ocean to lay the foundation of the Convent in Boston.

May 4th, 1817, the Misses Mary and Catharine Ryan, both of whom were thoroughly educated and accomplished, sailed from Limerick, in the ship *Victory*, for Boston, where they safely arrived, being joyfully received. Soon after they proceeded to Three Rivers,† Canada, to pass their novitiate in the Ursuline Convent at that place. In the meanwhile the Convent in Boston was being prepared.

October 4th, 1817, the two sisters made their profession at Three Rivers, choosing respectively the names of Mary St. Joseph and Mary St. Madelaine. Proceeding to Boston they took possession of their little convent, which adjoined the Episcopal residence

\*Founded in 1537, by Angela Mereci, of Brescia (canonized May 24th, 1807). It was originally designed to be simply a sisterhood for nursing the sick, relieving the needy, and instructing poor girls. The members were allowed to live in their own families. Soon after the death of the foundress, the sisters began to wear a common dress. Thirty years later, the association spread into various parts of Italy. By degrees, the members began to live together and choose superiors. In 1604, the association in Paris, under Madelaine de Ste. Beuve, accepted the rule of St. Augustine, and assumed solemn vows, being confirmed as an Order by the Pope and the King in 1612. Without abandoning the work of caring for the sick and poor, they are mainly devoted to the education of young ladies. Not long since, the Order in North America numbered seventeen communities.

† The Convent at Three Rivers was established at the suggestion of Bishop St. Valier, December 21, 1697, the first Superior of the convent being Mother Bronet de Jesus. This convent has had its trials, and has been twice destroyed by fire, once in 1752, and again in 1806. This institution has a hospital and school, and a large number enjoy the benefit of both, free. I have to acknowledge the politeness of the Superior in responding to my inquiries, and especially the frequent assistance of Sister Mary St. Joseph, who was a personal friend of Sister Sainte Claire, and whose rich memory has rendered her letters of very great value. It was she who brought her sister out of the convent of Mount Benedict as related on page —.

and the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, situated in Federal street. A grille only separated the church from the convent, the choir of the latter commanding a view of the interior of the former. Thus the Nuns enjoyed every religious advantage, and heard sermons every Sunday. The Convent had been built under the direction of Bishop de Cheverus, and as already indicated, with funds provided by Rev. Mr. Thayer who, in the meanwhile had passed away from earth.

The first novice received into the community was SISTER MARY SAINTE CLAIRE; Sister Mary St. Martha, being the second. It was on New Year's Eve, 1820, that Sister Sainte Claire assumed those vows by which she renounced the world. The ceremony of reception was private, the Bishop presiding, and only a few pupils being present, in addition to the members of the community.

And it should be noticed here, that Sister Sainte Claire entered upon the Conventual life at a mature age, after the expiration of the period during which a mere romanticism often seizes upon the soul, and before reaching the point at which some natures are liable to be overtaken by apathy and despair. Sister Sainte Claire carried with her to the cloister a heart fully alive to the beauties and joys as well as to the sorrows of the world, not deeming the convent the charnel house of blasted hopes and disappointed affections, but rather the congenial abode of simple faith and ardent love; the resort of those who consecrate themselves to that which, in their case, they deem the superior vocation.

Every person conversant with history understands that the conventual system may be abused and the discipline relaxed, until life in the cloister drops down to the low plane upon which the average Protestant would so often view it; yet justice calls us to amend the false conception, to eliminate the element of vain regret, of craven fear, and slothful ease. These things may sometimes be accidents, but never the essentials of monastic life; which was designed for vigorous growth; a life not only of sanctified thought, but of holy action. This life is indeed comparatively concealed, yet it is hidden for a purpose. like the leaven in the measures of meal. Those who would

appreciate this, should consult Montalembert, where he treats of the high service of prayer.\* Men leave the world, at times, for the world's good. This renunciation implies neither contempt for the world nor the claim of superior sanctity; though at the same time it may indicate the desire for a sanctity that a class of persons believe they may not otherwise attain. In a word it is claimed that conventual discipline affords only *one* of those methods by which Christianity lifts up to itself and hallows the humblest duties and relations of life. Says the "Ursuline Manual:" "The most exalted sanctity is attainable in every state and condition of life, *provided*, that it is embraced in compliance with the will of God, and its particular obligation faithfully discharged, for His love."

Such, at least, is the opinion of that Church, in accordance with whose discipline Sister Sainte Claire humbly walked, and in whose communion she so peacefully died. Evidently she had but one ambition, which was to do her duty in that state of life to which she believed herself called. Asking for nothing more, she deemed that,—

"The trivial round, the common task,  
Would furnish all we ought to ask;  
Room to deny ourselves; a road  
To bring us daily nearer God."

It was in accordance with this conviction that Sister Sainte Claire decided to enter the Order of Ursula as a Lay Sister, and it was this which led her to decline to take those steps which were necessary in

\* Montalembert says: "Le premier de tous les services con-féraient les moines a la société chrétienne, c'était donc de prier, de prier beaucoup, de prier toujours pour tous ceux qui prient mal ou ne prient point. La Chrétienté honorait et estimait surtout en eux cette immense force d'intercession, ces supplications toujours fervente, ces torrent de prières sans cesse versées aux pied du Dieu qui vent qu' on l'implore."—*Les Moines D'Occident*, vol. 1, p. xlviii.

On this same subject Montalembert quotes Chrysostom: "Age vers et illud insuper examinemus quam in parte monachis qua contra in parte Rex subditis beneficus sit. Igitur hic quidem aurum largitur, ille vero spiritus gratiam. Præterea idem hic dum bonus est pauperem salvit, ille autem animas demonium tyrannide oppressas precibus liberat."—*Comparatio regis et Monachi*, C. 4. Paris Translation.

order to become a Chœur Religious. Like Martha, of Bethany, she would busy herself with serving. Though possessing all the characteristics of a superior mind, which she continued to improve during the entire course of her long life, by reading and reflection, no work appeared too humble; and at different times she exercised a general supervision of household duties, though, generally, she acted as Infirmarian. Yet, whatever may have been the work, it was invariably well done, and won the approval of the Community.

Sister Sainte Claire entered upon her conventual duties with zeal; and, though at first comparatively light, they soon increased as the community grew in numbers, and the *clientèle* was enlarged. But let us now return to the Boston Convent.

The members next received were the third Miss Ryan (Margaret) afterwards Sister Mary St. Augustine, and Mrs. Catharine Molineux, known as Mary St. Angela. Mrs. Molineux, a widow, was Miss Ryan's cousin. The reception of the two latter was public. Having previously undergone their Novitiate at Three Rivers, they came to Boston and assumed their vows, standing before the high altar of the cathedral, Bishop de Cheverus presiding. Soon after the community was increased by the addition of Sister Mary St. John (Miss Elizabeth Harrison) and Sister Mary St. Francis (Catherine Wiseman). All these accessions attracted public attention, and the subject was discussed in the public press; but a timely exposition of the objects of the institution allayed the excitement, and the work of the community soon met with much favor.

Yet unexpected changes came, and, before six years had flown by, no less than three of the Sisters were taken away by death. In the meanwhile, also, the first patron of the convent had been called to France by Louis XVIII., where, as Cardinal de Cheverus, he was honored among the greatest and most saintly of the land. The successor of Monseigneur de Cheverus, Bishop Fenwick, was equally interested in the welfare of the little convent.\* Yet he could not stay the

\* In connection with this subject I have to acknowledge my obligations to Doctor John Gilmary Shea, who has labored much in connection with the history of the religious orders in the United States.

hand of death. In fact, the situation of the building proved unhealthy, and the loss of the three members of the community referred to was generally attributed to the badness of the air. Sister St. Angela died in 1822, and Sister St. Magdalene followed her. The Superior, Mother Mary St. Joseph, was the next to fail; and, finding that her end was approaching, she wrote to Quebec, earnestly imploring that ancient community of Ursulines to send her a successor. In accordance with this request, Mary Edmond St. George (Mary Ursula Moffat) was selected. The new Superior reached Boston a few days before the decease of Mother St. Joseph, and labored to the utmost in administering aid and consolation to the sorrowing community.

It now being clear that a change was necessary, the little convent was sold to Bishop Fenwick, and arrangements were made for the erection of a beautiful building on Mount Benedict, then a part of Charlestown, but now included within the limits of Somerville.

The Sisters left Boston early one summer morning, in July, 1826, and about six o'clock reached a little brick house at the side of Mount Benedict, which was to serve as their home until the convent was finished. Sister Sainte Claire, of course, accompanied the community, to which she was devotedly attached. In these narrow quarters they lived until April, 1828. But even here the little band was overshadowed by death, and here the last of the three Miss Ryans passed away. Sister St. Augustine died August 11th, 1827.

Before her departure, she requested Bishop Fenwick to have her taken up into the cupola of the convent, then approaching completion, in order that she might enjoy the prospect. Like Moses on Pisgah, she viewed the Promised Land, and, descending, was borne to her apartment in the little house at the side of the hill, and a few days afterward passed peacefully to her reward.

In 1828, the convent was finished, and the community, now numbering eleven persons, took possession of their new home.

In selecting sites the founders of Monastic estab-



lishments have, generally, when possible, fixed upon situations marked by natural beauty. And that of Mount Benedict was one of unusual loveliness, especially at the early period of which I write. The summit of the hill commanded extensive views in all directions, including the valleys of the sinuous Mystic and the silvery Charles, the green slopes of Bunker Hill, the distant city, the harbor and the sea. Though *in* the world, the convent was not *of* the world, the too close approach of which was guarded against by ample and delightful grounds. Indeed, there was nothing for miles around to disturb the quiet and repose of monastic life, the mercantile wants of the community finding their fullest expression in the noiseless traffic of the drowsy canal, which formed the boundary of the grounds on the north-easterly side.

The interior of the convent received its tone from the tranquil scenes without, and peace reigned in the establishment, which, in all its appointments, was characterized by a refined simplicity. The days came and went, the Sisters in their various capacities quietly and lovingly performing their duties, the sweet-toned bells alternately marking the hours of labor and prayer.

Yet to-day all is changed, and the convent is no more. The crumbling walls indeed remain; and, in walking about it is an easy task to assign the positions, and say: here was the Refectory, there the Dortoirs, the Salon, and the Community; and, finally, one may quote from the description of a beautiful ruin in Brittany, "La Garraye," which, like that of Mount Benedict, was the creation of a blind mob, and say,—

"This was the chapel, that the stair;  
Here, where all lies damp and bare,  
The fragrant thurible was swung,  
The silver lamp in beauty hung."

But the incense will never float upward again. For a few seasons the wild flower may continue to pour out its fragrance upon the summer air, while for lamps there will be the light of the constant stars; and then, perhaps, the so-called march of improvement will sweep the vine-clad ruins away. But we are anticipating.

When the community entered its new home, Sister Sainte Claire, in common with the rest, found an increased demand upon her time and strength. The institution rose at once to great favor and popularity, especially with the better class of Protestant families, and, ere long, the Sisters had under their charge about fifty pupils, drawn from various parts of the country. The daily care of this number of young girls was no light task, and the community was obliged to employ a considerable number of female domestics, besides laborers for the gardens and grounds, which were laid out with great taste, and cared for at considerable expense. In the labors of the community, Sister Sainte Claire was exceedingly active and ever ready to do all that lay in her power. She was, however, especially charged with the office of Infirmarian, and, under the physician, was chiefly responsible for the health of the pupils. An aged member of the Order, once at Mount Benedict, writes: "One was never afraid to ask her to do anything." This, however, is not the place to speak in detail of daily life in the convent; and it must therefore suffice to say that six years rolled by filled up with labors of love; and, though death\* entered the little community, their experience was, on the whole, highly satisfactory. But since all things have an end, the peace of the convent itself was finally invaded, and in an unexpected hour, the establishment was reduced to ruins.

Circumstances having transpired for which the community was not responsible, and over which the Sisters had no control, during the month of August, 1834, inflamed the minds of a class of unthinking people; while cruel, malicious and unfounded reports industriously put in circulation, added to the excitement, thus throwing the baser sort into a passion of ungovernable fury. The Selectmen of Charlestown, anticipating the possible result, took action with respect to the rumors referred to, rumors the baseness

\* Miss Margaret O'Keefe died here, and was entombed in the chapel of the convent garden. Her conventual name was Mary St. Madelaine. She made her profession only a short time before her death, being desirous of so doing, though knowing well that her days were drawing to a close. Sister Madelaine was eminently saintly in character, and her loss was greatly deplored.

and malignity of which were promptly recognized by thoughtful citizens, and a committee was appointed to visit the convent and report the result of their investigations. The committee, however, moved too slowly as the event proved. Saturday afternoon, August 11th, the visit was made, and resulted, as a matter of course, in the complete exoneration of the community. The report, however, which was intended to allay public excitement, was not lodged with the Boston press until too late for the edition of Monday morning, and on Monday night a ruthless mob, gathered out of all the countryside, did its appointed work. Yet, even up to the end of Monday evening, no serious catastrophe was anticipated, and parents who had children at the convent left the grounds and returned to their homes with the conviction that all would be well. Nevertheless, as midnight approached the assembly of rioters in front of the convent began to increase, and eventually a bonfire was kindled, which added to the excitement, and suggested what was to come. In the meanwhile the Selectmen presented the incarnation of feebleness, even as the rioters shadowed forth the mind of the Fiend. At last, the mob, reinforced by additional numbers, set itself in array, attacked the convent, burst in the windows and doors, drove out the unoffending nuns and their pupils, pillaged the apartments, committing every atrocity that hatred and malice could suggest, and then applied the torch. Soon the convent was wrapped in flames; and from its elevation on Mount Benedict, the conflagration illuminated all the neighboring towns, the tongues of fire as they darted up into the clouds, threatening to be incendiaries of the sky.

In the meanwhile, the nuns and their pupils driven out half clad into the night air, took their way towards the nearest houses to seek shelter, the poor children being frightened and bewildered, though the nuns met the dangers bravely, and showed themselves calm and undismayed. When, however, the Sisters reached the little summer-house they were greatly alarmed by finding that one of their number, Sister St. Augustine, was missing. Being somewhat seriously indisposed, she had retired to the children's dormitory, and, in the haste, was for the moment over-

looked. When her absence was discovered, Sister Mary St. Joseph hastened back to the convent in the dark, all the windows and doors being then broken in. On entering, she met two men, who stood aside to let her pass, at the same time loudly condemning "Bishop Fenwick" for having so long kept the nuns here as "prisoners." Pushing on to the children's dormitory, she found Sister St. Augustine asleep, and awoke her, and "dragged more than conducted" her out of the convent into the garden, where they met several of the oldest of the scholars, who had also returned to search for the missing nun, and who seized her and carried her off "as if she were a doll." "They were noble-minded girls," adds my aged informant, Mere Mary St. Joseph, of Three Rivers, "and loved us sincerely."

The Sisters then left the grounds, and were kindly received at the residence of Mrs. Adams, while the children were conducted to the house of another family, though afterwards transferred to the former house. When morning dawned, only the smoking walls of the convent remained, while the gardens and grounds were trampled under foot, and the little Eden completely destroyed. Literally nothing was left to the good Religious or the pupils. The funds of the convent, several thousand dollars, chiefly due to creditors, were stolen by the rioters, who destroyed furniture and valuable pianos and harps, gleefully tossing the fragments into the flames. A portion of Bishop Fenwick's library alone escaped, the books being kept in a little lodge outside the convent walls.

With the return of day, the members of the now homeless community sadly entered some closed carriages, and drove away from the wreck of the retreat which had been rendered so beautiful by their own industry, accepting a temporary asylum at the house of the Sisters of Charity, in Hamilton Place, Boston.

The worst, however, is still to be told, for the sack of the convent doubtless cost one young and valuable life. Let this result be stated in the language of the late venerable Dr. Abraham R. Thompson, the steadfast friend and vindicator of the outraged sisterhood, who begins an article in the *Bunker Hill Aurora* of October 25th, 1834, as follows: "Died, on the 18th

instant, at the residence of the Ursuline Community, Brinley Place, Roxbury, Miss St. Henry, aged 20 years and 6 months. This beautiful girl was sick at Mount Benedict when the convent was burned, and suffered a dreadful shock in the horrors of that awful night, from which she never recovered. On the following morning she was removed to the house of the Sisters of Charity, in Boston, and lingered until the 11th instant, when she was removed to the place where she died. At this time she was so low that she could not stand alone, and it seemed hardly possible to remove her; but she could not bear to be separated from the beloved ladies of the community, and they literally took her and carried her over like an infant in their arms. She was pleased with their new situation, and enjoyed the scenery very much. The afternoon before she died, her bed was turned around, so that she could see Mount Benedict from her window. She viewed it a long time, and seemed much consoled by the fact that Mount Benedict could be so distinctly seen from Brinley Place. During the course of her illness, so far from manifesting any ill will against the ruffians, who by demolishing the convent had been accessory to her death, she often expressed pity for them, and prayed that they might be forgiven. On the night of the 17th she slept soundly, and on the 18th departed from this to a better world." The writer has also been informed that the funeral of Sister St. Henry was one of a marked character. The Marquis de la Fayette had but recently died, and arrangements had been made for elaborate obsequies. At the last moment, however, the order was changed, and the honors intended for the soldier were transferred to the nun.

But notwithstanding the magnitude of the disaster, the community was not altogether cast down; and, resolving not to remain idle, as already indicated, they secured a house in Brinley Place, Roxbury, and undertook to repair their fallen fortunes. In this, however, they were not successful; and so poor was the prospect that Sister Sainte Claire and others early decided to repair to the Ursuline Convent\* at Que-

\* The Ursulines were established at Quebec by Madame De la Peltrie, a widow of rank and fortune, who devoted all that she possessed to her work. Their first convent was built in

bec, leaving the Superior and two Sisters to look after the general interests.

October 22nd, Sister Sainte Claire, in the company of four others, set out from Roxbury for Quebec, traversing what, half a century ago, was a rude wilderness, resolved to seek a refuge with the nuns of her order who had long been established there. The con-

1641, and destroyed by fire, Dec. 30, 1650. January 21, 1651, they entered the private residence of Madame de la Peltrie, which had been prepared for their reception. This building was in turn destroyed by a conflagration, but such was the estimation in which the sisters were held, that on the following year the convent was rebuilt, the community in the interval finding refuge for the second time with the Hospitalieres. The convent occupies seven acres of ground within its own fief of St. Joseph, near Garden Street. The chapel dedicated to St. Ursula is ninety-five feet by forty-five, the nave being open to the public, and the portion behind the grating connecting with the convent. It is a plain but interesting building, and contains a marble slab to the memory of Marquis de Montcalm, whose remains are said to rest within the precincts of the convent. There are also some good pictures on the walls.

Miss Holt, in her "Autobiographical Sketch," speaking of early life says, "I was placed as a day scholar at the Ursuline Convent. It was then the best school in the city for girls, and as an educational establishment I think it has never been surpassed. \* \* \* Reserved, quiet, and rather studiously inclined, the cloister life attracted me powerfully. The black-veiled nuns, with their dark flowing robes, the long and silent corridors, with their low, mysterious-looking doors, religious services in the 'Chœur,' where the voices of the Sisters mingled with the soft notes of the organ, the lighted and beautifully-decorated altar, all combined to captivate my childish fancy, and the ardent affection, bordering on idolatry, which I felt for some of the kind nuns, completed the charm. Even now, worn and spent with the battle of life, it refreshes me to look back on those peaceful convent days, and could my reason assent to the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church, it is within those walls, that I would pass the remainder of my life.\*\*\* The annual examinations, attended by relatives and friends admitted by tickets, presented a pretty scene. The immense room was generally densely packed on every side. The walls and pillars, decked with evergreen and wreathed with roses, contrasted well with the white dresses of the pupils, each class distinguished by a different colored badge, a pink,—green, scarlet, or blue sash worn over the left shoulder. After the more serious exercises in the arena of art and science, the company were enlivened by various little dramas, performed by the pupils. Then came the thrilling moment preceding the crowning of the victors—the parting address in the rich tones of good old Father Magnire, and the final announcement, 'Mes enfants, la seance est terminée.'"

I am very greatly indebted to the Superior of this convent, and to the Assistant, Sister St. Thomas, for valuable communications and various acts of that considerate and disinterested kindness so characteristic of the Order.



vent was practically French, like the city itself, which alone of all the North American cities affords a tolerable representation of an European city of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The nuns travelled in a closed carriage, drawn by three horses, under the conduct of a skilful and trusty coachman, passing through New Hampshire to Burlington, Vermont, where they embarked upon Lake Champlain for St. Johns. Thence they proceeded over a rough road to Montreal, resting at the latter place, in the *Hotel Dieu*, for eight days. At a public house in New Hampshire the good Religious were considered a phenomenon at least; for when they entered the people who were there before them not only rose, but jumped up from the tables and beat a precipitate retreat. The Sisters, though sorry on account of the consternation which they created, nevertheless indulged in a smile. Bucolic simplicity was easily alarmed.

The little company of wanderers reached Quebec on the eve of All Saints, (November 1st) and were joyfully received by the community. Here those who did not already know the French language thoroughly set about the study; Sister Sainte Claire finding immediate use for her knowledge and skill in the Infirmary.

But the subject of this sketch was not long allowed to remain in the peaceful quiet of the cloister, as the trial of the rioters was appointed to take place in December, and it was found necessary for her to return to Boston. In company with Sister St. John (Miss Elizabeth Harrison), Sister Sainte Claire took up the long journey under the protection of Mr. Kilchern, the Russian Consul, who had been deputed by Bishop Fenwick to conduct them to Boston. Sister Sainte Claire appeared in court at Cambridge, December 16th, when she gave a clear and succinct account of the burning of the convent, and also identified a piece of silver plate.

This "trial," in the heated state of the public mind, proved well nigh a farce; though at a subsequent period a young man was convicted, and sentenced to prison for life. He was afterwards pardoned, on the petition of Bishop Fenwick, and the members of the

Sisterhood which had suffered so cruelly through his crime. And this act shows the animus of the Ursulines from first to last; while the citizens of Boston, led by the most enlightened and candid men of the community, being assembled in Faneuil Hall, declared, after the most minute investigation of all the facts of the case, that the honor of the inmates of the convent was without stain. This work of supererogation done, for no man whose opinion was worthy of regard had ever entertained for a moment the base insinuations which unprincipled adventurers had scattered abroad, next declared that the good Ursulines should be indemnified for their losses, which amounted to fifty thousand dollars; but the assembly unfortunately dissolved without providing the indemnification. Afterwards the State Legislature listened to several petitions on the subject, put itself in a sympathetic attitude, and was really very sorry; but action appearing somewhat more just than *politic*, nothing was done. And thus for more than two score years the blackened ruins of Mount Benedict have stood, mutely looking towards Bunker Hill, forming a keen sarcasm upon the administration of justice, and a monument to perpetuate the memory of a most conspicuous and unatoned violation of human rights. Sister Sainte Claire, however, had, amongst her heirlooms, the following bit of French:—"Ce qui est différé n'est pas perdu."

Sometime during July of the following year, 1835, the community in Brinley Place\* was broken up, it being clear that nothing could then be accomplished, especially as the authorities of the State had failed to meet their claims. The Superior, Sister St. George, conducted the little company to Quebec, being attended by the Rev. J. Maguire, S. J., Chaplain of the Ursulines in that city, who at this time was returning thither from a visit to Rome. Sister Sainte Claire departed with this little band, arriving safely at her destination.

The Sisters remained quietly at their duties in the

\* Brinley Place is the "Dearborn Estate," formerly owned by Gen. H. A. S. Dearborn, son of Gen. H. Dearborn, of Revolutionary fame. The Redemptorist Fathers are now building an elegant church on this site.



convent of Quebec, where they were most hospitably received, until the year 1838, Sister Sainte Claire serving as Infirmarian, her favorite *role*. Some of the pupils connected with the convent at that period have passed away from earth, but not a few of those who remain think of her with feelings of love and respect, and vividly remember her unvarying kindness and tender care.

On the 17th of September, 1838, Bishop Fenwick, having decided to make an effort to restore the convent in the diocese of Boston, Sister Sainte Claire and others once more commenced the journey to Massachusetts under the care of the Rev. Mr. Maguire, and reached that city in safety, near the close of the month. The house selected was in Quincy Place, near Fort Hill, where they were duly installed; Sister St. Benedict (Miss Mary Barbour\*) being Superior, and Sister St. Joseph (Miss Harrison) Assistant. But this effort likewise failed, as the State still neglected to indemnify the community for its heavy losses. Therefore, in 1840, there being no accessions to their ranks, and the prospect for the future appearing so gloomy, it was finally resolved to disband. While the Sisters lived in Quincy Place they were treated with great kindness, especially by their neighbors, one of whom, I am informed, though a professional gentleman, manifested his sympathy with them by coming to the house in the winter and shovelling away the snow from their doorsteps.

It was in the month of April that the community separated, sad, but resigned, it being felt by the Sisters that Providence did not intend to favor their designs at that particular time. The Superior and Sister St. John went to Quebec; Sister St. Joseph (Miss O'Keefe) and Sister St. Ursula (Miss Chace) went to Three Rivers, arriving there April 23; while Sister Saint Ambrose† and Sister Sainte Claire

\* Miss Barbour was the daughter of an Episcopal clergyman, who became a priest of the Roman Church. Two other daughters also became Ursulines; and a fourth, with her mother, entered the community of Visitation Nuns at Georgetown, D.C. Miss Barbour died at Quebec, May 1, 1848.

† Sister St. Ambrose died at Galveston, Texas, whither she went to found a new house of the order.

departed for the convent at New Orleans.\* Another Sister, Mary St. Augustine, also a Miss O'Keefe, and now Superior of the convent at New Orleans was detained at Boston by sickness, and did not reach the southern convent until October of the following year.

Sister Sainte Claire proceeded to her destination by water, and, on reaching New Orleans, in November, 1840, was most affectionately received by the members of the community, in which she was destined to pass the remaining portion of her long and active life.

From this time forward her history was quite uneventful. Occupied with her duties, which were chiefly those of the Infirmarian, her days glided peacefully by, until at last her strength failed, and, in her turn, she was obliged to become the recipient of the same tender care that she had been wont to lavish upon others. It was not, however, until she had spent half a century in the active duties of her Order that she took up her abode in the Infirmary. But even there, though suffering from weakness and pain, she was never idle; indeed, as the Superior wrote, under date of February 25th, 1874, Sister Sainte Claire "is very active for a person of her age; she can read, knit, and even sew, without glasses. She is always cheerful and happy, and is much beloved by the members of the community." At this time there was no symptom to "make us fear for her life;" though

\* The ancient Ursuline Convent of New Orleans was established by the French government in 1727, and was situated in Conde street. It was built in the Tuscan composite style, and its antique appearance rendered it an object of interest. It was occupied by the Ursulines until 1824, when they sold the property (afterwards used by the State Legislature, and, still later, by the bishop as his residence) and purchased lands two miles below the city, where the new convent was built. The main building is of brick, the front two hundred feet long, with two wings in the rear, this forming three sides of a square. There is accommodation for about forty nuns, and has a chapel adjoining the apartments of the Sisters. Near by is the house of the priests. The convent has two hundred and forty acres of land attached, a part of which is low ground covered with woods. The institution is beautifully situated, and the gardens and walks are admirably arranged. The situation is also healthy, and the views of the river are charming. The convent is well endowed. I am indebted to the present Superior, Mere St. Augustine, for valuable assistance in the preparation of this sketch of Sister Sainte Claire.

a few months after Sister Sainte Claire was no more. Her decease was, therefore, on the whole, somewhat unexpected; and on September 25th, 1875, she calmly passed from earth to heaven.

Sister St. Seraphine, in announcing this event, says: "Our dear Sister's health was as good as usual, until a few days previous to her death, when she complained of a pain and difficulty in breathing. Her strength rapidly declined, and after four days of suffering, she expired, her intellectual faculties unimpaired to the last moment. I need not say how much we all regret her, on account of her many virtues and her amiable, cheerful disposition. I am confident that your saintly aunt is now in heaven."

Two days afterwards, September 27th, the mortal remains of Sister Sainte Claire were laid in the tomb of the convent cemetery, the entire community taking part in the obsequies. The officiating priest was the Reverend A. Simond, S. J., assisted by the Reverend V. Boudard, Chaplain of the convent.

The announcement of Sister Sainte Claire's decease, through a beautiful and feeling circular, having been made to all the members of the order in North America, the suffrages of all were faithfully accorded.

A slip of paper found in one of the books of Sister Sainte Claire bore the following:—

"What have I desired in Heaven or Earth but Thee, O thou God of my heart, and my portion forever; my Jesus, I devote myself wholly to thee; I wish for nothing but Thee; O thou God of my heart, I wish for nothing more. *Pater—Ave—Gloria Patri.*"

A little French picture of the Infancy of Jesus also impressed her mind, and seems to have been constantly near her. It bore a motto from St. John's Gospel:—

"Je vous ai donné l'exemple, afin que pensant a ce que J'ai fait, vous le fassiez aussi."

In corresponding with her family, Sister Sainte Claire expressed her complete satisfaction with the life that she had chosen, which was evidently one of peace and joy. Though for many years separated from her kindred, she never appeared to love them

less, because she loved her chosen service more. The writer very well remembers a visit made to her when still but a child, and the affectionate warmth with which he was received. Of her kindred, Sister Sainte Claire spoke down to those last moments when the lips refused their office; "and I am confident," says the Superior, "that she is now in heaven praying for you."

In her girlhood Sister Sainte Claire was noted for the liveliness and natural gaiety of her disposition. And these traits were never lost. Her temperament was eminently cheerful, and there was in her nature a vein of natural happiness. This made her society in old age enjoyable. She was fond of witty remarks, and capable of making them. But though of such quick perception and excellent intelligence, the religious sentiment dominated over all. Sister Sainte Claire was truly humble and devout; and as time rolled on it appeared that,—

"Her hopes, her fears, her joys were all  
Bounded within the cloister wall."

Nothing could interrupt the calm flow of religious feeling, or shake her love for her Saviour and God; and thus, when the end came, she was found ready to pass into the unseen land,—the land of the nightless day and the winterless year,—there to meet, eye to eye, Him whom she had known by faith upon Earth, and who was all in all.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

## APPENDIX.

---

### THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CONVENT.

“Soon after sunset, several persons were seen at the gate of the avenue leading from the road to the convent, and on being inquired of concerning the reason of being there, gave evasive and impertinent answers; but [there] was nothing in their language or numbers which led to the belief that a serious riot was to be apprehended. Soon after 9 o'clock, the rioters began to assemble in considerable numbers, arriving on foot and in wagons from different quarters; and a party of about forty or fifty persons proceeded to the front of the building, using violent and abusive language. They were addressed by the lady at the head of the establishment, who, desiring to know their wishes, was replied to, that they wanted to enter and see the person alleged to be secreted. She answered that their selectmen had that day visited the house, and that any of them, on the [ir] calling the next day at a suitable hour, might see for themselves; at the same time remonstrating against such violations of the peace and of the repose of so many children of their most reputable citizens. Shortly afterward, the same or another party, with increased numbers, approached the convent, using still more threatening, and much gross and indecent language. The lady above referred to again addressed them in terms of remonstrance and reproach, and desired to know whether none of their selectmen were present. Some of them replied that there was one, mentioning his name. He then came forward and announced his presence, stating that he was there for the purpose of defending her. She inquired whether he had procured the attendance of any other of the board; and upon being answered in the negative, replied that she would not trust the establishment to his protection, and that if he came there to protect them, he would show it by taking measures to disperse [the mob]. It appears from various testimony that he did attempt to dissuade the rioters from their design, by assurances that the selectmen had seen the nun who was supposed to have been secreted, and that the stories reported concerning her were untrue; but his assertions only drew forth expressions of distrust and insult. The mob continued on the ground with much noise and tumult, and were in that state left by this magistrate, who returned home and retired to bed.

At about eleven o'clock a bonfire was kindled on the land of Alva Kelley, adjoining that of the eastern boundary of the convent, and distant about two hundred and seventy yards

from the building, the fences of which were taken for the purpose. This is believed to have been a concerted signal for the assemblage of all concerned in the plot. The bells were then rung as for an alarm of fire in Charlestown and in this city [Boston], and great multitudes arrived from all quarters. Upon this alarm the magistrate above mentioned arose, and proceeded to procure the attendance of others of the selectmen. In the meantime, the Charlestown engines, and some from Boston had arrived, one of the latter of which, passing those of Charlestown, which had halted opposite the bonfire, immediately proceeded into the avenue leading to the convent, where her arrival was greeted with a shout from some of the rioters upon the hill and among the shrubbery, many of whom, seizing hold of the rope, proceeded with her up the avenue, around the circular walk, to the front of the building, when the attack was instantly commenced by the breaking of fences and the hurling of stones and clubs against the windows and doors. Upon this, the engine, by order of the commander, was immediately carried down into the road, and stationed opposite to the gate, where it remained during the night. At the time of this attack upon the convent, there were within the walls about sixty female children and ten adults, one of whom was in the last stage of consumption, another suffering under convulsion fits, and the unhappy female who had been the immediate cause of the excitement was in a raving delirium. No warning was given of the intended assault nor could the miscreants by whom it was made have known whether their missiles might kill or wound the helpless inmates of this devoted dwelling. Fortunately for them, cowardice prompted what mercy and manhood denied; after the first attack, the assailants paused awhile, from the fear that some secret force was concealed in the convent or in ambush to surprise them; and in this interval the governess was enabled to secure the retreat of her little flock of terrified Sisters into the garden. But before this was fully effected, the rioters, finding they had nothing but women and children to contend against, regained their courage, and ere all the inmates could escape, entered the building. It appears that during these proceedings the magistrate above referred to, with another of the selectmen, had arrived, and entered the convent with the rioters, for the purpose, as they state, of assisting its inmates. The mob had now full possession of the house, and loud cries were heard for torches and lights. One of the magistrates in question availed himself of this cry to deter the rioters from firing the building, by stating that if lights were brought they might be detected. Three or four torches, which were, or precisely resembled engine torches, were then brought up from the road, and immediately upon their arrival, the rioters proceeded into every room in the building, rifling every drawer, desk, and trunk which they found, and breaking up and destroying all the furniture, and casting much of it from the windows; sacrificing, in their brutal fury, costly piano-fortes, and harps, and other valuable instruments, the little treasures of the children, abandoned in their hasty flight, and even the vessels and symbols of Christian worship. After having ransacked every room in the building, they proceeded with great deliberation, about one o'clock, to make preparations for setting fire to it. For this purpose broken furniture, books, curtains, and other combustible materials, were placed in the



centre of several of the rooms; and, as if in mockery of God as well as of man, the Bible was cast, with shouts of exultation, upon the pile first kindled; and as upon this was subsequently thrown the vestments used in religious service, and the ornaments of the altar, their shouts and yells were repeated. Nor did they cease until the cross was wrenched from its place and cast into the flames, as the final triumph of this fiendlike enterprise. But the work of destruction did not end here. Soon after the convent was in flames, the rioters passed on to the library, or Bishop's lodge, which stood near, and after throwing the books and pictures from the windows, a prey to those without, fired that also. Some time afterwards they proceeded to the farm-house formerly occupied as the convent, and making a similar assault with stones and clubs upon the doors and windows, in order to ascertain whether they had anything to fear from persons within, the torches were deliberately applied to the building; and, unwilling to have one object connected with the establishment to escape their fury, although the day had broken, and the three buildings were in flames, or reduced to ashes, the extensive barn, with its contents, was in like manner devoted to destruction. And not content with all this, they burst open the tomb of the establishment, rifled it of the sacred vessels there deposited, wrested the plates from the coffins, and exposed to view the mouldering remains of their tenants. Nor is this the least humiliating feature in this scene of cowardly and audacious violation of all that man ought to hold sacred and dear, that it was perpetrated in the presence of men vested with authority, and of multitudes of our fellow-citizens, while not one arm was lifted in defence of helpless women and children, or in vindication of the violated laws of God and man. The spirit of violence, sacrilege, and plunder reigned triumphant. Crime alone seemed to confer courage,—while humanity, manhood and patriotism quailed or stood irresolute and confounded in its presence.—[Report of Citizens of Boston, contained in Bishop England's Works, Vol. v. page 237.]

















LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 069 524 5

